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Potential East-West Migration

Demographic Structure, Motives and Intentions

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Abstract: This article is based on a large survey which tries to identify the migration potential in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. More than 4,000 persons were asked if they want to migrate, which steps they have undertaken to realise the migration, what their social circumstances are and what they expect of staying and working abroad. One main result was the fact that all scenarios that predict an imminent exodus of people from East and Central Europe are exaggerating the real dimension of East-West migration. The migration potential in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary is somewhere between a possible 4 million and a more likely 700,000 persons. The latter figure is less than 1% of the population over the age of 14. This figure remains, however, higher than the numbers foreseen by the law for annual immigration to Austria and Germany and higher than the numbers that are thought of as politically acceptable. Furthermore the article gives principal information concerning the demographic and social structure of the people who are willing to leave their country and planning a short or longer stay in Western Europe.

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1. Preliminary Remarks

Large-scale East-West migration was characteristic of the late 19th and early 20th centuries [cf. Fassmann and Münz 1994a]. Austria-Hungary, the German Empire and France were the destinations of migrants from East and South-east Europe. With the spread of industrial methods of production from the mid-19th century, with far-reaching improvements in public transport and the liberalisation of laws concerning the right of establishment, East-West migration reached substantial proportions. The industrial centres of Lorraine, the Ruhr and the Vienna Basin joined the European metropolises of Paris, Berlin and Vienna as migration destinations for several hundred thousand people from East and East-Central Europe. Until the Second World War, Berlin was the centre of attraction for Prussians, Silesians, Poles and people from the Baltics, whilst Vienna was for Bohemians, Moravians and Jews from Galicia and Bukowina.

The second stage of East-West European migration was a direct result of the Second World War and its consequences for the post-war European order. According to rough estimates 15.4 million people had to leave their former home countries in the years after the war (1944-50); taken alone more than 12 million East and ethnic Germans fled from the former eastern parts of the German Reich and Poland or were expelled from Czechoslovakia. The national borders settled at Yalta and Potsdam affected not only East

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and ethnic Germans. Poles had to leave their settlements in former Eastern Poland (now parts of Lithuania, Belorussia and the Ukraine), large numbers of Czechs and Slovaks went to the Sudetenland – South Bohemia, South Moravia and the southern parts of Slovakia, and about the same number of Ukrainians and Belorussians had to leave Poland for the East.

The Cold War and the Iron Curtain stopped most East-West migration, but it continued to some extent, even after 1950. About 13.3 million people took part in the migration waves from Eastern to Western Europe that define the third period of European East-West mass migration. The migration of ethnic Germans played the major role during that stage of East-West migration but there was also a substantial proportion of refugee migration, especially in years of crisis and dramatic political events (Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia, 1968, Poland 1981). The events of 1989-90 not only changed the political landscape of our continent but also brought about a completely new view of political asylum and normal migration, particularly East-West European migration. Until 1989 mobility between East and West was reduced to a minimum by administrative hurdles, the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. As a result the West's 'open door' policy towards Central and Eastern Europe ran no risks but was still of great symbolic importance. The mass exodus of East Germans to West Germany and the rapid increase from 1989 onwards in asylum-seekers and migrants, not only from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe no longer ruled by Communists, but also from Turkey and the countries breaking away from the Yugoslav Federation, brought about a change in public opinion and led to a policy U-turn. Most of the Western European countries passed more restrictive migration laws.

But more than by the increasing numbers of East-West migrants, the general public in Western Europe was made to feel insecure by a series of opinion surveys on the possible extent of East-West migration. Depending on the questions asked and the methodology used, they suggested that the number of immigrants from the countries of East-Central Europe would be between several hundred thousand and several million people. Many such surveys, however, do not meet even the most basic requirements of modern empirical social science research. Nevertheless, the results are used to fan fears of a new exodus – fears, which, to some extent, are irrational and superficial.

2. Migration Potential in East-Central Europe: Methods and Results

2.1 Methodological aspects

Austria is one of the countries located directly beside the former Iron Curtain. Therefore the public opinion and the political decision makers are very interested in knowing more about potential East-West Migration. To clarify the diffuse and contradictory knowledge, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Science, Transport and the Arts commissioned a research project with the main aim of empirically determining potential migration. From the beginning it was clear that only a short-term estimate of migration potential is possible with survey methods. A longer-term estimate could be achieved by using demographic and economic forecasts based on the variations in population developments in potential countries of origin and destination, and prevailing income differences there; any forecasts for the following one, two or even five years based thereon would, however, be inaccurate.

Questions on the readiness of people to migrate play a central role in a survey concerning migration potential. How many people articulate such a readiness and what economic characteristics this group exhibits are among the most revealing questions. It is well-known that the proportion of people prepared to migrate as a percentage of the total population is not very high and so the sample must be large enough to allow later disaggregations concerning migration potential. If the sample includes only 100 persons, and only one in ten of the persons interviewed declares a readiness to migrate, this leaves a sample of only 10 persons, which certainly cannot be differentiated by further criteria.

It was therefore necessary to use a larger sample in order to be sure after the interviews that the number of persons declaring a readiness to migrate did not fall below a statistical confidence interval. The sample on which the foregoing analysis is based meets these requirements. It comprises a total of 4,392 persons who were chosen on the basis of a quota sample out of the total population over the age of 14. The type of survey chosen was a one-issue survey (a one-issue survey deals only with a questionnaire on the issue concerned – unlike multi-issue surveys in which one issue is combined with others).

The questionnaire was administered in the form of personal interviews conducted in the interviewees' homes. The interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes. The feedback of the interviewers on the methods used was extremely positive. There was a general interest in the issue and a readiness to answer the question truthfully. The small proportion of missing responses that can be attributed to a refusal to answer the questions is perhaps an indicator of this.

The interviews took place in June and July 1996 in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. They were carried out by the Austrian Gallup Institute together with its Central European partners in the countries concerned. The survey itself was designed by the authors of this article. It consisted of about 50 questions which comprised a series of issues: the intention to migrate, experience of migration, reasons for the intended migration and settlement, and basic socio-demographic characteristics [cf. Fassmann and Hintermann 1997].

2.2 The general, probable and 'real' potential for migration

Determining the potential for migration is a complicated issue. It is certainly not enough just to ask people whether or not they would like to live abroad for some time. Every intention to migrate involves a varying degree of probability. Such an intention may be very general and unspecific or very concrete and specific. Depending on the questions used, it is easy to achieve extremely high or very low numbers of potential migrants. Because of the political sensitivity of this topic it is very important to handle the definition of a potential migrant very carefully.

In the following empirical analyses the term 'potential' is differentiated into three different categories which vary from a very general potential to a 'real' potential. The definition of the categories is based on three questions:

1. *I have thought of going abroad.*
2. *I have at least gathered information about the target country in question.*
3. *I have already applied for a residence permit or a work permit.*

The general migration potential comprises all people who answered yes to the first question (i.e. those people who merely declare a desire to migrate without taking any further steps in this direction). The probable migration potential sums up all those who answered

yes to the second question. Those who gave a positive answer to the third question and thus have begun to make their migration a reality are eventually comprised in the real migration potential.

When we start by considering the general migration potential, the above-mentioned migration scenarios created in the early 1990s appear to be confirmed. About 20% of the Czechs interviewed claim to be thinking of migrating. The corresponding figures for Poland are 17%, for Hungary about 20% and for Slovakia as high as 30%. If extrapolated in line with the total population over the age of 14 concerned, this would produce a gross migration figure of about 10 million.

A full realisation of this general migration potential appears unlikely. Links with the native country, difficulties and problems in preparing migration, and the high material and psychological costs involved with migration are often underestimated and, though migration may be desired in a general way, it often remains unrealised. In addition, the immigration policies of the potential target countries act as a very effective restraint on possible migration movements. Quota regulations like those in Austria allow a longer period of residence and work only to a quantitatively very limited number of foreigners selected in line with qualitative criteria.

Table 1. General, probable and 'real' migration potential

| | General | | Migration Potential | | Probable | | 'Real' | |
|----------------|-----------|------|---------------------|------|----------|------|--------|------|
| | Total | in % | Total | in % | Total | in % | Total | in % |
| Czech Republic | 1,673,176 | 20.1 | 988,848 | 11.8 | 177,356 | 2.13 | | |
| Slovakia | 1,251,456 | 30.3 | 730,850 | 17.7 | 90,105 | 2.18 | | |
| Poland | 4,923,244 | 16.6 | 1,644,363 | 5.5 | 393,859 | 1.33 | | |
| Hungary | 1,717,018 | 20.5 | 721,147 | 8.6 | 60,095 | 0.72 | | |
| Total | 9,564,894 | 18.9 | 4,085,208 | 8.1 | 721,415 | 1.43 | | |

* as % of total population over 14.

Sources: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996; official statistics of countries concerned, own figures.)

Even if the general migration potential in East-Central Europe is still about 10 million, the probable migration potential can be estimated at only about 4 million. This figure decreases even further when only the 'real' migration potential is considered. It then falls to around 700,000 persons. As a percentage of the population aged over 14, the 'real' migration potential is about 2.1% in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, 1.3% in Poland and less than 1% in Hungary.

What is important is the fact that 68% of those who can be classified as 'real' potential migrants do not want to stay forever in the target countries. Half of them prefer a short term stay up to two years, only about 10% want to stay forever and about 62% do not only consider a permanent but also a pendular migration. This empirical intention is important because it illustrates the different character of the 'new' East-West migration which can better be interpreted as a new form of spatial mobility and cannot be compared with the classical emigration from East to West in the 19th century and after 1945.

This does not mean that all potential migrants who declare a short term stay abroad are really going to stay only for the intended time period. It is well-known that in most cases the actual stay abroad exceeds the intended stay but it shows that with the fall of the

Iron Curtain 'normal' labour market regions will return. In the case of Vienna, for example, one can assume that the catchment area for pendular migrants will expand to Slovakia in the same direction and distance as to Lower Austria and Burgenland [cf. Fassmann and Kollar 1996].

3. Structural Characteristics of Potential Migrants

Which population groups consider migrating? Those who can be seen as losers in the transition process and for whom taking a job in Western Europe is a way to secure their existence? Or those who are perfectly successful and almost established in their own country but who want to enjoy higher incomes in the potential target countries? Both of these are possible and it is possible to argue both these motives.

3.1 Demographic and social characteristics

3.1.1 Age and gender distribution

The potential migrants are predominantly male. They account for two-thirds of those expressing the desire to live abroad. The phenomenon of 'new' potential migration from East-Central Europe is thus in an early stage for it can often be seen that men migrate first and then only later get their wives, children and close relatives to join them.

This gender proportion of potential migrants changes when the countries surveyed are considered separately. The country with the highest percentage of women who would like to emigrate is Hungary with 40.1%, whereas the Czech Republic has the lowest percentage with 33.9%. The results for Poland, whose proportion of potential women migrants (36.4%) is even somewhat below the average of the countries surveyed, thus contrast with the 'real' migration behaviour observable during the 1980s. At that time the proportion of women was annually over 50% [Grzegorzewska-Mischka 1995: 65].

Table 2. Gender Distribution and Age Structure of Potential Migrants
(in percentages)

| | Male | Female | Under 24 | 25-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50+ |
|----------------|------|--------|----------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Czech Republic | 66.1 | 33.9 | 43.4 | 14.3 | 17.0 | 17.9 | 7.4 |
| Slovakia | 60.1 | 39.9 | 39.2 | 11.0 | 27.4 | 15.3 | 7.1 |
| Poland | 63.6 | 36.4 | 38.2 | 12.9 | 26.7 | 15.3 | 6.9 |
| Hungary | 59.9 | 40.1 | 41.3 | 13.0 | 18.9 | 15.9 | 10.9 |
| Average | 62.4 | 37.6 | 40.5 | 12.6 | 22.8 | 16.2 | 7.9 |

Source: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996

The age distribution of potential migrants is at least as characteristic of an early phase of migration as the gender distribution. About 76% are under 40 with those under 24 accounting for 40.5% alone. This means that nearly half of all the under-24s consider migration. A comparison between the countries shows only minor divergencies in this respect. In all four countries surveyed the proportion of those under 40 is over 70%.

3.1.2 Marital Status

Together with age and gender, marital status also influences the intention to migrate. The results show that more than half of those in the survey who consider migration are single with unmarried people forming the largest group. This is not surprising given that almost 50% of the potential migrants are under 25.

Table 3. Marital Status of Potential Migrants (in percentages)

| | Unmarried | Married | Divorced | Separated | Widowed |
|----------------|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|
| Czech Republic | 50.4 | 34.5 | 13.4 | 0.4 | 1.3 |
| Slovakia | 45.7 | 43.5 | 8.3 | 0.6 | 1.9 |
| Poland | 50.8 | 45.6 | 2.6 | 1.0 | / |
| Hungary | 48.0 | 44.5 | 5.2 | 0.4 | 1.9 |
| Average | 48.4 | 41.8 | 7.9 | 0.6 | 1.3 |

Source: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996

Somewhat more surprising is the strong readiness to migrate of married people. About 42% of those considering migration are married. The existence of a family is thus no grounds for not considering migration. Quite the contrary. Working abroad is a strategy followed by many married people to increase the family income and to minimise the risk that several family members may become unemployed at the same time. Nevertheless the intended length of stay abroad has to be taken into consideration. In most cases, people do not intend to stay abroad forever and therefore family ties are not so important.

3.1.3 Educational Qualifications

The high educational qualifications of potential migrants accord with the reality of East-West migration. A 'brain-drain' – an outward flow of human capital – at the expense of the countries of origin and a 'brain-waste' – a waste of knowledge and training – in the target countries is the result. Despite this general finding, analyses show that at least for certain groups of migrants, higher levels of education and training eventually help potential migrants to achieve a better job on the labour market and a greater degree of integration in the target country [Hintermann 1995].

The potential migrants from East-Central European countries display an extremely high educational level. Of those who are in general positive about a migration 12.2% are university graduates; 43% have successfully completed a middle or higher level school; 31.4% have completed a vocational school course and only 13.7% have 'only' gone through compulsory schooling.

Table 4. Educational Level of Potential Migrants (in percentages)

| | Compulsory School | Vocational School | Middle and higher level school | University |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Czech Republic | 15.7 | 29.2 | 45.7 | 9.4 |
| Slovakia | 14.3 | 29.7 | 42.7 | 1.3 |
| Poland | 20.1 | 29.4 | 42.7 | 7.8 |
| Hungary | 3.6 | 39.2 | 38.5 | 18.7 |
| Average | 13.7 | 31.4 | 42.7 | 12.2 |

Source: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996)

Of the four countries surveyed, the one suffering the highest potential 'brain-drain' is Hungary; 18.7% of those positively inclined towards the possibility of migration, possess a university degree and 30.7% are qualified for university entrance. Compulsory school leavers, on the other hand, very seldom consider migration. By contrast, Poland displayed the lowest outflow of human capital. Even though these figures should not be taken for granted as reflecting the 'real' migration picture, there is still reason to question the claim

of some observers that the 'brain-drain' from East-Central Europe has already peaked [Okoloski 1994].

3.1.4 Occupation

One of the most important features of the profile of potential migrants concerns their occupation. What kind of people with what occupational background consider migration?

Table 5. Last Jobs of Potential Migrants by Occupational Group
(in percentages)

| | Average | Czech Rep. | Slovakia | Poland | Hungary |
|------------------------|---------|------------|----------|--------|---------|
| Unemployed | 14.0 | 7.4 | 22.4 | 16.4 | 9.8 |
| Office, administration | 10.6 | 9.4 | 11.3 | 13.0 | 8.6 |
| Production | 10.5 | 10.4 | 8.7 | 7.9 | 14.5 |
| Pupils, students | 9.7 | 9.8 | 4.5 | 19.6 | 4.5 |
| Trade, transport | 8.6 | 9.7 | 8.7 | 6.8 | 8.6 |
| Construction | 7.9 | 13.5 | 12.0 | 3.9 | 1.6 |
| Technical jobs | 6.4 | 9.5 | 7.5 | 1.9 | 6.4 |
| Not in active life* | 5.5 | 4.3 | 2.7 | 7.0 | 7.5 |
| Workers unspecified | 4.8 | 3.8 | 2.6 | 3.8 | 8.6 |
| Health Service | 3.9 | 5.5 | 4.3 | 3.3 | 2.3 |
| Other jobs | 3.8 | 1.9 | 1.3 | / | 11.5 |
| Agriculture, forestry | 3.5 | / | 0.3 | 8.0 | 5.2 |
| Teaching, research | 3.5 | 1.9 | 3.4 | 4.4 | 4.0 |
| Service jobs | 3.3 | 7.5 | 6.9 | 0.6 | 3.5 |
| Self-employees | 3.1 | 5.4 | 2.9 | 0.0 | 2.8 |
| Labouring jobs | 0.9 | / | 0.5 | 2.5 | 0.6 |

*) 'not in active life' includes pensioners, housewives and those on maternity leave.

Source: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996

The findings show 14% are unemployed, 9.7% are school pupils and university students, 10.6% are office and administrative workers while 10.5% work in production. As a proportion of the totals for their respective occupational groups, employees in production branches and in construction consider migration markedly more often than those in office and administrative jobs, trade and transport or in certain service sector jobs. The lowest potential migration rates are found among those working in agriculture or forestry and among those who are not active at the moment.

The average figures show, however, that the picture for the different countries can vary quite strongly. The differences in construction stand out in particular. In both the Czech Republic (13.5%) and Slovakia (12%) they account for the largest and second largest group of potential migrants. The respective figures for Poland and Hungary are only 3.5% and 1.6%. The number of unemployed also varies, reflecting national employment conditions. Slovakia and Poland have the highest proportion of unemployed among the potential migrants, with the lowest proportion in the Czech Republic.

3.1.5 Income Distribution

In order to establish a clearer social profile of potential migrants, those surveyed were asked to state the income they earned in their last job in their home country. Those

income groups that tend to consider migration might have been assumed to be those with low incomes in their home country who safely expect to earn more on West European labour markets, or conversely successful people who look to climb further up the economic ladder. It was necessary to find out if those surveyed really fit the theoretical 'push-pull' model which sees income differences and poor job prospects as influencing or even determining migration.

To eliminate inaccuracies, the earnings data were classified into three income groups.¹ Three income groups were formed to represent a bottom third, a group in the middle and a top third. The income distribution of the potential migrants shows very clearly an over-representation of those in the middle third and, to some extent, those in the top third income groups. Those in the bottom third income group much less often express a wish to migrate. Considering the low average age, it becomes clear that the migration potential is much more a selection of the economically successful. Those considering migration are not the poorest people in their country. Such people do not have the means to cover the costs that ensue from migration and often have no access to the required information.

Poland diverges most from this general pattern. There the proportion of low earners almost corresponds to the expected figure of 33%. Conversely, Slovakia diverges upwards, where it is the above-average earners that tend to be prepared to migrate.

Table 6. Potential Migrants by Income in their Home Country (in percentages)

| | Low | Income Medium | High |
|----------------|------|------------------|------|
| Czech Republic | 20.2 | 45.7 | 34.1 |
| Slovakia | 14.6 | 48.9 | 36.5 |
| Poland | 28.7 | 45.6 | 25.7 |
| Hungary | 17.7 | 52.9 | 29.4 |
| Average | 19.5 | 48.2 | 32.3 |

Source: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996

3.1.6 Previous Experience of Migration

Another of the human capital factors influencing people's inclination to migrate is the extent of their previous geographical mobility. It can be assumed that people who have already moved once or more often are also more likely to consider migration in the future as a result of their higher level of mobility in the past. This assumption can be summarised by the idea that mobility produces mobility.

The data presented here confirm this assumption. Participation in potential migration increases with the number of times people have moved. Of those surveyed who have moved at least once in the past 36.8% consider migration, as compared with only 19.6% of those who have never moved.

¹) The division into three income groups refers to the monthly household income of the people interviewed and does not necessarily correspond with official income classifications. Members of the lowest income group earn up to ATS 3,000, as calculated with the exchange rates at the time of the survey period. The middle third earns between ATS 3,000 and 6,000 and the highest income group more than ATS 6,000.

This greater preparedness to migrate increases when the previous move(s) had already included a move abroad. Of the 9.7% of those surveyed who have already lived abroad, 45.3% are considering migrating again, but only 19.3% of those with no experience of living abroad are considering migrating. The link is particularly close in Slovakia and Hungary; in both cases more than half of those surveyed who are experienced 'migrators' respond positively to the idea of migrating again.

3.2 Target Areas of Potential Migrants

The target areas of the potential migrants are not surprising. Austria and Germany remain the most significant potential target countries for migration from East-Central Europe. More than a third of all those surveyed – about 37% – would choose Germany as their migration destination and about a quarter – 24.4% – Austria.

Germany is mentioned most often in the Czech Republic and Austria in Hungary - a finding that underlines the importance of geographical distance when choosing the target country.² The lowest proportion (55.2%) of potential migrants to Germany and Austria is found in Poland, compared with over 60% in the other three countries. Austria, in particular, is chosen less often by Poles than by Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians. This is probably not due to the greater geographical distance as to the privileged treatment in Germany of Polish migrants who have German roots [Fassmann, Kohlbacher, and Reeger 1995].

Table 7. Target Countries of Potential Migrants (in percentages)

| | Average | Czech Rep. | Slovakia | Poland | Hungary |
|-----------------------|---------|------------|----------|--------|---------|
| Germany | 37.0 | 42.6 | 36.3 | 37.4 | 31.4 |
| Austria | 24.4 | 22.6 | 25.9 | 17.8 | 30.5 |
| Switzerland | 9.1 | 8.3 | 13.0 | 7.7 | 5.7 |
| Great Britain | 6.4 | 9.2 | 7.1 | 4.5 | 3.8 |
| France | 4.1 | 2.9 | 4.1 | 5.4 | 4.3 |
| Italy | 3.9 | 5.8 | 2.6 | 5.1 | 2.3 |
| Scandinavia | 3.3 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 3.1 | 4.9 |
| Netherlands | 2.8 | 3.4 | 2.3 | 3.5 | 2.2 |
| East European country | 2.8 | 2.5 | 6.3 | 0.5 | / |
| Other (esp. USA, CAN) | 6.4 | / | / | 15.0 | 14.9 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996)

All other countries in both Western and Eastern Europe play a very subordinate role as potential target countries for migration. Switzerland continues to assert a relatively high claim with an average of 9.1%, but the other countries are well below 10%. France, Italy, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe are under 5%. The high proportion (15%) of both Polish and Hungarian potential migrants expressing a preference for target countries other than

²) According to the distance model people living in border districts to Western European countries should show a greater readiness to migrate. It is not however possible to confirm this on the basis of the existing data because the territorial representativity is unfortunately not fully given (some districts are missing). But what can be followed with certainty is the significant role distance patterns play in the decision for a particular destination country.

those named is striking. Within this group there is a clear preference for the United States and Canada followed by New Zealand and Australia.

3.3 Reasons for Migration

The results of the analysis of people's motives are unambiguous. The most important reason given by those people in East-Central Europe that consider migration is 'the higher earnings possibilities' abroad. More than 90% of all those surveyed stated that was 'very important' or 'important'. The 'better working conditions abroad' come second as a reason for a potential migration; about 80% said this was 'important' or 'very important'. And an average figure of 79% cited 'curiosity and spirit of adventure' as a reason.

Table 8. Important Reasons for Migration (in percentages)*

| Reasons | Average | Czech. Rep. | Slovakia | Poland | Hungary |
|---------------------------|---------|-------------|----------|--------|---------|
| Higher earnings | 96.2 | 96.8 | 96.8 | 96.4 | 92.6 |
| Better working conditions | 79.9 | 74.5 | 83.6 | 75.6 | 81.2 |
| Curiosity, adventure | 79.0 | 87.6 | 71.2 | 79.5 | 80.1 |
| Better career chances | 52.0 | 47.5 | 41.6 | 53.1 | 74.4 |
| Further education chances | 48.9 | 54.1 | 39.1 | 42.0 | 65.8 |
| Unemployment | 33.8 | 35.5 | 44.1 | 26.6 | 21.0 |
| Political situation | 31.1 | 22.7 | 38.9 | 27.3 | 34.0 |
| Bad environment | 30.8 | 21.5 | 26.9 | 27.5 | 40.2 |
| Family abroad | 27.7 | 27.2 | 26.4 | 29.8 | 28.2 |
| Ethnic minority | 7.7 | 11.4 | 7.7 | 7.1 | 3.4 |

*) The categories 'very important' and 'important' were added together and represented in one category.

Source: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996

The first three reasons for migration are seen as particularly important in all the countries. Thereafter, however, there are some considerable differences. Hungarians see 'better career chances abroad' and 'better living conditions' as particularly important. The high value given to 'unemployment' is especially striking in Slovakia, where it ranks fourth on the hierarchy of reasons for migration at 44.1%, as compared with Poland and Hungary where it plays only a subordinate role – despite equally high actual rates of unemployment.

Against the background of the 'push-pull' model, the analysis of the findings indicates that at least one of the model's hypotheses – the income-differential hypothesis – plays a substantial role in explaining the migration motives of potential East-Central European migrants. Income differences between the country of origin and the potential target country, the chance to improve living conditions, better working conditions, further education opportunities and better career chances are among the most important reasons given by those in the survey who stated they would consider migration. The second main hypothesis of the 'push-pull' model – the job-vacancy hypothesis – does not achieve in practice the status attributed to it in theory. Although unemployment is seen by about a third of those surveyed as an important or very important reason for migration, the loss of their jobs does not directly lead the large majority to consider migration.

3.4 Future Prospects

3.4.1 *Job and income expectations*

One main aspect of the survey's questions aimed to clarify the expectations potential migrants have of their potential residence abroad. Do these expectations correspond to reality or is most of Western Europe seen as an El Dorado where earning money is very easy? The answers are in general remarkable. They show that the majority of those who intend to work abroad have a good knowledge of the labour market situation in Western Europe. Only few potential migrants expect it to be easy to find a job and a high income. Most are sure that it will be difficult to find an adequate job abroad. The 'optimists' are mostly to be found in the Czech Republic and Hungary, the 'pessimists' in Poland.

The overwhelming majority of those surveyed who incline to migration state that they would also take a job abroad below their level of training. On average, 77.4% are not only aware of the fact that foreign workers on Western European labour markets are very often employed under their level of qualification, but also accept this in their own case. The proportion is highest in Slovakia (82.6%) and lowest in the Czech Republic (70.6%).

The answers to the question concerning earning expectations in Western Europe also display a strong realism and an extensive knowledge of wage levels in Western Europe. More than half of the population of East-Central Europe that is positive towards migration reckon with an income of up to ATS 10,000; 32.2% reckon to be able to earn between ATS 10,000 and ATS 20,000 and only 9.8% expect to earn more. This income distribution is probably very close to what foreign workers can expect to earn in Austria in the short term.

The people who were surveyed in Hungary are especially 'pessimistic', with 85.1% expecting to earn only the lowest-level incomes. It is the Poles that link the highest income expectations with potential migration. About 17% of them expect an income of more than ATS 20,000. The highest expectations of high incomes are entertained by those who want to migrate to Switzerland and Scandinavia. The same is true of those heading for France, whereas the wage expectations of those destined for Austria are rather low – 74% think that they can earn no more than ATS 10,000 and only 3% expect more than ATS 20,000. Only those few people who want to migrate to another East European country have equally low income expectations.

3.4.2 *Investment Plans and Use of Income*

Given that the possibility of higher earnings abroad is the most important reason for migration for the large majority of potential migrants, the question arises as to the extent to which they already have clear ideas of how to use the income they aim to earn abroad. This is important because very often the optimistic idea prevails that the income will be used by the migrants to create an independent existence, to set up their own firm or business. The period of residence abroad would thus serve to improve capital resources and to modernise the home economy.

An analysis of the data suggests a different picture. The overwhelming majority of potential migrants (about three-quarters) need the increased income to 'finance their everyday lives'. The frequency of this response is highest among Czechs (86.7%) and lowest among Poles (58.3%). High status is also ascribed to 'the children's education', for which 43% of potential migrants would use the income earned abroad. In third place comes 'the

purchase of expensive consumer goods', on which 42% of those surveyed would either probably or certainly spend their increased income.

Table 9. Purpose for which income earned abroad would be used
(in percentages)*

| | Average | Czech Rep. | Slovakia | Poland | Hungary |
|----------------------------------|---------|------------|----------|--------|---------|
| Financing everyday life | 75.3 | 86.7 | 74.1 | 58.3 | 79.8 |
| Children's education | 43.1 | 39.8 | 46.6 | 38.4 | 46.1 |
| Expensive consumer goods | 41.8 | 42.5 | 46.2 | 43.3 | 30.7 |
| Sending money home | 39.0 | 39.7 | 43.9 | 33.3 | 45.8 |
| Building/purchase of own home | 35.0 | 39.4 | 30.2 | 37.6 | 35.1 |
| Purchase of own flat | 32.9 | 28.4 | 34.9 | 33.7 | 34.3 |
| To start own firm | 20.6 | 15.9 | 15.4 | 35.5 | 19.3 |

*) The responses 'Yes, certainly' and 'probably' were added together and expressed in one category.

Source: Gallup Survey, June-July 1996

These priority uses are followed by 'sending money home' (40%), 'the purchase or building of one's own flat or house' (35% / 33%). Only a minority aims at 'setting up a firm'; around 20% (and an exceptionally high 35% in Poland) intend to invest their increased income in this way in their home country. This means that great expectations concerning the stimulating effects of the prospective work abroad on the economies of the home countries are not very realistic. The majority of potential East-Central European migrants want to improve their immediate living conditions, their aims being short rather than long-term.

4. Outlook

All scenarios that predict an imminent exodus of people from East and Central Europe exaggerate the dimension of the expected flows. The migration potential in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary is somewhere between a possible 4 million and a more likely 700,000 persons. The latter figure is less than 1% of the population over the age of 14. This figure remains, however, higher than that foreseen by the law for annual immigration into Austria and Germany, the two most important target countries, and higher than figures that are thought of as politically acceptable, but much lower, however, than those implied by the scenario of mass migration.

The phenomenon of 'new' and largely only potential migration from East-Central Europe is still in an early phase. This is indicated by the structural qualities of the population that expresses a readiness to migrate. Two-thirds of those expressing the wish to live abroad for some time are men; three-quarters are under 40 and two-thirds of them want to leave their own country alone, without relatives. Another characteristic of those who come into the category of potential migrants is their high level of qualification.

The intended duration of the stay abroad corresponds no longer to the image of classic emigration but can generally better be seen as high spatial mobility. The majority of those who want to live and work in foreign countries want to do this only for a shorter period of time. Nearly half of all potential migrants would stay abroad no longer than two years. This fact could be interpreted as a sign of the early stage of the migration but also

as an indicator of the emergence of new regional labour markets with daily, weekly or seasonal pendular migration. The survey also indicates why people consider migration or pendular migration. The main reasons are the pull factors of the West European labour market such as higher earnings, better working conditions and career chances and better opportunities for further education. Push factors like high unemployment, the political situation and unfavourable environmental conditions at home are more peripheral.

The expectations concerning the jobs abroad and the achievable incomes are not very optimistic. A third believe it will be very difficult to find a suitable job. On average, 77.4% are not only aware that foreign workers usually have to work below their level of qualification but also expect this for themselves. This points to a phenomenon which was described as 'anticipated dequalification' in a previously-published ISR study [c.f. Fassmann, Kohlbacher and Reeger 1995].

The survey shows very clearly that despite the actual fall in migration, the potential for migration remains stable. This different dynamic between 'real' migration potential and the legal possibilities for migration produces increasing political problems which cannot be solved by strict border controls. The growing gap between potential and possible migration leads, on the one hand, to an increase in those travelling as tourists and working illegally in Western Europe, and on the other hand to a general break with the ideals of Western Europe that has demanded the freedom of movement for East and East Central Europe for years. The number of workers from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria or Hungary working without permission is growing. They are paid poorly and are without any legal rights [cf. Mydel and Fassmann 1997]. The restricted possibilities of legal employment produce a new social underclass which is a serious problem both for the native population as well as for the foreigners.

On the other side, it would be naive to ignore the existing migration potential and to guarantee freedom of movement all at once in the case of EU-enlargement towards Eastern Europe. It is clear that a special and temporary restricted regulation is necessary to control and to limit the freedom of movement.

What is necessary in any case is an approach that includes more realism and rationality in the judgement of a possible or probable migration potential, but also a clear acceptance of the fact that East-West migration is not the exception but a new normality within an integrated Europe.

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